



**HUI HO'OMALU
STATEWIDE
RESOURCE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

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Building Connections

A Newsletter for Foster/Resource Families

Volume 1, Issue 4

July 2008

As Time Goes By...

By Paul Brennan, Foster/Resource Parent

Foster parenting can be a fleeting thing . . . especially if the children placed with us are short-term. Even in long-term placements the time we spend with them may pass so quickly that we may have just found some successful strategies . . . and the youth graduate, transition into independent living, and then are off to other experiences. For my wife and myself, foster parents now for 25 years, some of our most fulfilling experiences have come years after they have been emancipated from our home. Not that we have forgotten them! For many of our former foster youth, the ties that have been established were sufficient to keep the contacts intact, in fact, stronger than ever, and growing.

So it was for us on our recent trip to attend the National Foster Parent Association Conference in Atlanta (May 12-16), we scheduled reunions with two of our former "kids" now living on the mainland. Latoya, now 27, had just previously given birth to her first child. So off we went to Seattle, her home for the last seven years, to celebrate not only her successful delivery, but her new loving relationship as a single parent, with her child. We couldn't have been more fulfilled! The responsible, doting care she is giving her son was powerful to witness. "I'm going to make sure my child receives from me what I didn't get," she exclaimed several times. We believe she means it and will provide over time her very best. What a difference from the unattached 13 year old Latoya we first invited into our home!

That same Mothers Day we landed in Atlanta, and as planned, were met by our first foster child of 25 years ago. Now 36--and with the roles reversed--Fred was there with his wife, Whitney, eagerly awaiting our arrival. They had driven the six hour trip from their Mississippi home, and now could chauffeur us around Georgia's capital.

For three days we were together, like little kids again, visiting the aquarium, the botanical garden, the capitol, but always reminiscing, reflecting, reveling in how well life has turned out. "That one year with you was my family year," he repeated several times enthusiastically and without resentment. Fred is no victim--although he easily could be--and his steady employment record, his deep commitment to Whitney, his optimistic outlook on life, speaks volumes about what he has had to overcome.

My wife and I had traveled some 5,000 miles away to attend a foster conference--which was instructive and inspiring in its own right--but the far greater value lay in these forever family contacts which confirmed and validated all we had ever attempted. That journey, always risky, sometimes painful, often uncertain, now was being vindicated before our very eyes. So it will always be. These children we had adopted into our lives, made our love available forever to them, and no one wishes that bond to be severed. In the passage of time, though we now have reached the grandparents' age, there is no greater reimbursement, no finer tribute. To see all your children stable and mature, following in the footsteps of (what did we often say?) "the respectful, responsible, fun-to-be-with", that's life's greatest joy!



**HUI HO'OMALU
STATEWIDE
RESOURCE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

The Hui Ho'omalua Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides support to the foster/resource family community through identifying ongoing needs, facilitating communication and by sharing resources.

The Building Connections Newsletter is published four times a year to provide information regarding foster and adoptive care to foster/resource parents, service providers, legal guardians and to the public.

This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

[www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/
social_services/child_welfare/
foster](http://www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster)

www.pidfoundation.org

To be placed on the mailing list or if you would like to receive an electronic copy, please call 441-1125 (O'ahu), 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

Partners in Development
Foundation
2040 Bachelot St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

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Support Groups

By Jamie McLaughlin
Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i



Resource families go through many challenges without knowing where to go for support. Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i has seven support groups statewide for just that. Currently, we hold a group on Maui, Hilo, Kona, and Kauai and three groups on Oahu. These groups are intended to give parents a chance to meet other families who may be dealing with similar issues and to empower them to gain support from each other. It is a safe place to discuss behavioral problems, concerns, breakthroughs and challenges your family may be going through.

Support groups are also a great way to learn about community resources. We offer informational brochures and even guest speakers from community organizations to explain their available resources. Parenting is a hard job and it's comforting to many parents when they realize they are not alone and that there is a lot of community support.

During a typical support group, a meal is shared and respite childcare is provided. For many parents it is a time to socialize and get to know new people while their children are looked after in a safe and fun environment.

"Thanks so very much for your gift of love to us", stated Minnie, a resource parent, who was thankful for the support she received at an Oahu support group.

If you or someone you know would like more information on our support groups, please contact Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i at 808-521-9531. Our support groups are open to foster, adoptive, guardianship and kinship parents. We encourage new families to come and explore new areas of support with us. Personal stories and experiences are more valuable than you can imagine to a new or struggling parent. Mahalo.

AUGUST 2008

Kona: August 13, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Halawa: August 22, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Maui: August 28, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Waianae: August 29, 2008 5:30-8:00pm

SEPTEMBER 2008

Kona: September 10, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Windward: September 12, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Waianae: September 19, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Maui: September 25, 2008 5:30-8:00pm
Halawa: September 26, 2008 5:30-8:00pm

COMING NEXT ISSUE: OHANA CONNECTIONS CORNER!

Beginning next quarter, we will have a regular column dedicated to sharing stories about family connections. Whether you're a foster youth, resource parent, bio family member, or service provider, we would love to hear from you! The column will be hosted by Wilma Friesema, 'Ohana Engagement Specialist, at EPIC, Inc. Wilma welcomes your written stories about the joys and challenges of family involvement. She's also happy to just talk story and translate that into a column too. The goal is to share experiences that inspire, teach, and remind us of the love and care that permeates our community. Don't be shy! Call Wilma at: 748-7921.

RELATIVE PLACEMENT PREFERENCE IN FOSTER CARE: ACT 199

On July 1, 2008, a new law (Act 199) took effect that would provide foster placement preferences for relatives when considering the appropriate plan for the child. This law also requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to make reasonable efforts to identify all relatives within six months of assuming custody of a child. This bill (SB2730) was introduced by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs but became a collaborative effort as many agencies, groups, families and individuals recognized the importance of getting this bill into law. For more information, please visit : <http://www.oha.org/kawaiola/2008/07/col-stender.php>

2008 STATEWIDE TRAINING CONFERENCE

By Linda Santos
Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i

"Helping Children in Foster Care Stay Connected to Their 'Ohana, Culture, and Community" was the theme for the First Annual Conference for Foster /Resource Families presented by Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i (FFP), a Hui Ho'omalu partner. Lorrie Lutz, MPP clinician, kinship caregiver, foster parent, trainer and consultant captivated the 146 resource parents and 112 service providers at five locations on four islands with her engaging approach to a very difficult subject for families.

The Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services funded this effort through the Hui to help ensure that training opportunities are available to resource families on neighbor islands as well as on O'ahu. The Conference, held June 2 (Maui), June 3 (Hilo), June 4 (Kona), June 5 (Kauai) and June 7 (O'ahu), received very high evaluations from participants. Child care and door prizes (including gift cards for gas!) were extra benefits. In addition to the annual conference, FFP provides state-wide quarterly trainings.

For more details on the content of the conference, read the "**Helping Children in Foster Care Stay Connected to Their 'Ohana, Culture, and Community**" article in this edition of RAC.



ATTENTION: MENTORING FAMILIES NEEDED

Resource Family Support Services is looking for Department of Human Services (DHS) families to participate in **Parent to Parent Mentoring**, a DHS funded pilot project on Oahu.

If you are a new DHS foster family looking for individual support, the Parent to Parent Mentoring Program is for you. Families will be matched with a seasoned foster family for one-on-one support, are able to attend family focused events, and have access to our knowledgeable staff.



The project is also looking for experienced foster families that would like to become mentors to new foster families. Mentor families must have a minimum of three years experience as a licensed DHS foster home and must be willing to complete an interview and orientation.

Our families benefit greatly from the additional support they receive from this program and the opportunity to interact with other families.

Interested families should contact Eva Chau at 521-9531.

Happy Anniversary!

How long have you been a foster/resource parent? We would like to honor you by printing your name and current years of service in our newsletter.

We know you are out there but we need your help. Please send your name and years of service to:

RAC@pidfoundation.org
(Oahu) 441-1125
(Toll Free) 888-879-8970

**Mahalo
for your
dedication
& hard
work!**



Helping Children in Foster Care Stay Connected to Their 'Ohana, Culture, and Community

By Linda Santos, Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i

"We are about to engage in a courageous conversation," Lorrie Lutz, this year's featured speaker at the Annual Resource/Foster Parent Conference, began her presentation. Indeed, the daylong sessions were conversations with Lorrie greeting participants and engaging them in a dialogue, and listening as well as talking about the importance of the role resource families play in supporting family connections for the children in their homes.

Using her own experiences as well as those of the hundreds of families with whom she has worked, Lorrie explained the need for children to maintain their relationships with their families; the importance of attending to those relationships; and how resource families can serve these children by helping them remain connected.

She used the words and experiences of real children in care to illustrate how important maintaining connections are to the healthy psychological development of children. Lorrie challenged Resource Families by stating, "One of the most critical factors impacting a child's lifelong connections is the effective relationship between the family of the child and their temporary caregiver."

Lorrie believes that effective resource families see themselves as a conduit for the birth family's efforts to have their children come home. Additionally, they find ways to support and encourage frequent and consistent visitation between the child and his/her birth family and they appreciate and understand the cultural connection throughout the life of the child.

In addition to discussing the importance of values and understanding, Lorrie gave participants some very practical suggestions for working effectively with birth families to ensure the best outcomes for the children. She helped them reassess how they view birth families and how to encourage positive, healthy interactions with the children from the very beginning of care. While always emphasizing that the safety of the children is paramount, there are many ways to minimize the trauma of separation for them. Setting up a meeting with the birth family and the resource family at the very beginning of placement is a key first step. This meeting helps plan a shared parenting approach and helps the resource family learn more about the child's needs.

To underscore the importance of culture in out-of-home care systems, Ms. Lutz showed a video, "Knowing Who You Are – helping youth in care develop their racial and ethnic identity" produced by Casey Family Programs. This video spotlights youth and workers talking about how important but difficult it is for youth in care to maintain their cultural identity in a system that often separates them from their culture.

Another clear message presented, was the importance of placing children with their siblings. 70% of children in care have siblings in care, but most are separated. Children need to have continued contact with their siblings and regular visitation, phone calls and emails should be encouraged and facilitated.

While stressing the significance of parent child visitation, Lorrie presented some very practical constructs on how to make visitation successful. These included: never using visitation as a bargaining chip or punishment, and structuring visits to be as natural as possible, such as in a park or for a meal.

Throughout the presentation, Lorrie challenged the group to identify one thing they would do differently in the following two weeks to assist children in foster care to stay connected to their 'Ohana, culture and community.

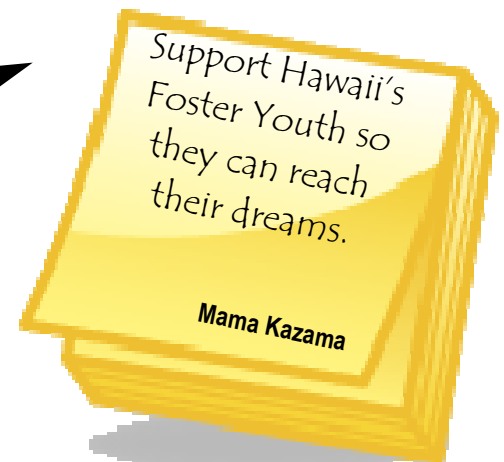


Mama Kazama's Mantra Moments...

By Lynne Kazama, DHS Program Development Staff



Summertime
Shaka Mama Kazama



SUPPORTING HAWAII'S FOSTER YOUTH IN MEETING THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION GOALS:

A beautiful ceremony took place at Washington Place where 50 foster youth who earned their high school diplomas or general education degree this year were honored. Another special moment was when Governor Linda Lingle signed into law Act 198 that would increase the time periods during which a former foster youth may apply for and receive higher education board benefits. This allowance will help the youth pay for living expenses while attending school or vocational training. This is a wonderful opportunity for our foster youth to help them reach their goals and dreams. For more information on Act 198, please see: <http://hawaii.gov/gov/leg/2008-session>

Community Classifieds

St. Augustine Episcopal Church in Kapaau on the Big Island is giving children's clothes, toys and items **free** to all foster parents. The church also provides free dinners on the last Saturday of the month that is open to everyone! The thrift store is open at that time as well in addition to every Wednesday from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. You can call the church for more information at 889-5390.

Do you have something that you would like to donate to other foster/resource parents but you don't know how to get the word out? Are you looking for something that would help you care for your foster/adoptive keiki but you don't know where to find it? The **Community Classifieds** may be able to help.

Let's help each other by sharing our resources. The **Community Classifieds** is FREE to post items to donate as well as wanted ads if you are looking for items to help you care for your keiki.

Send your classified ads to: E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org
(Oahu) 441-1125 or (Toll Free) 888-879-8970
(Toll Free) 888-879-8970

National Foster Care Month

May was National Foster Care Month, a time when foster/resource families are recognized for their dedication and hard work in caring for our keiki. There were so many agencies, individuals and communities that came together to coordinate different events and celebrations for the families. **MAHALO** to everyone for their generosity and support in making each event special! And also, a **BIG MAHALO** to our foster/resource families who selflessly open up their hearts and homes to Hawaii's keiki every day!

"He Makana Makamae" **West Hawaii Luncheon for Foster/Resource Families**

By Linda Case, West Hawaii Community Liaison

The "He Makana Makamae" (cherished gift) luncheon was held on May 3rd at the Keahou Outrigger Beach Resort Hotel in Kailua-Kona. The luncheon was held in honor of our West Hawaii foster/resource families. More than 70 adults and 50 children received a buffet lunch with many wonderful door prizes. Prizes included:

- ❖ Big Island Candies-gift certificates
- ❖ Kona Country Club-certificate for a game of golf
- ❖ Alter ego-certificate for a body massage
- ❖ Waikoloa Beach Resort Marriot –Luau for two
- ❖ Mauna Kea Resort – Breakfast Buffet for two
- ❖ Ocean Sports – 3 gift certificates for the Glass Bottom Boat Ride
- ❖ Big Island Discovery – circle island tour for two
- ❖ King Kamehameha's Beach Resort–Prime Rib & Seafood Buffet for two
- ❖ ATV Outfitter Hawaii – certificate for guided ATV rides for two
- ❖ Sheraton Keahou Bay Resort – Seafood Buffet for two

The guest speaker was Deputy Director Henry Oliva from Honolulu who spoke with encouraging words to our West Hawaii Foster/Resource Families. Our families were also presented with appreciation certificates by Big Island Councilwoman Brenda Ford and Councilman Angel Pilago. The certificates were beautifully done with a gold seal and personally signed by each council person. Keiki ID was there to take the keiki pictures for each individual ID card.

Frank Delima from Honolulu entertained and filled the room with laughter. The emcee, Larry Ursua from West Hawaii Fatherhood Initiative, was the perfect host to make the luncheon a great success.

The luncheon was made possible with the support and generous contributions from Knights of Columbus of Kona, Friends of the Children's Justice Center, Department of Human Services, Hui Ho'omalua, Catholic Charities Hawaii, Foster Family Programs, Epic 'Ohana Conferences and Personal Parenting Services.

Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business

100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting our foster/resource families

Display advertisements with borders: business card size = \$30; 1/4 page = \$50; 1/2 page = \$75; full page = \$115.

Send information to:

Hui Hoomalu—RAC, 680 Iwilei Rd., Ste. 500, Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: 441-1125 (Oahu); 888-879-8970 (Toll Free); Fax: 441-1122; E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

Hui Ho'omalua RAC reserves the right to accept, reject or edit advertisements, articles and notices of events based on publication schedule, space limitations, and appropriateness.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST:

- Foster Family Program Support Groups for foster/resource families (See page 2 for details).

SEPTEMBER:

- Foster Family Program Support Groups for foster/resource families (See page 2 for details).

NOVEMBER:

- 12 Proclamation of Adoption Month.** State Capitol.
- 15 National Adoption Day.** Family Court House. 10 am—2 pm. Finalize adoptions of children from foster care & celebrate all adoptive families.
- 20 Maui Workshop.** Sponsored by the Department of Human Services, Hanai Coalition, and Hawaii Foster Parent Association. 9 am—1 pm. Location TBA. Speaker Jim Gritter, MSW.
- 21 “No Longer a Guest: Opening Heart and Home to an Adopted or Foster Child”** with speaker Jim Gritter, MSW. Sponsored by the Hawaii Adoption & Permanency Alliance (HAPA) and Child and Family Service. 8:30 am—4:00 pm. Japanese Cultural Center (2454 S. Beretania St.). \$60 if registered before Oct. 15 and \$70 thereafter. Limited scholarships for foster families & student discounts available; call for details and eligibility (Charlotte at 543-8446).

Quality Assurance Corner

By Jason Badua, QA and Improvement Specialist

Foster Parent Annual Survey

The surveys are in! Thank you to all who have completed the Foster Parent Annual Survey through either the mail or online. We greatly appreciate your feedback, as it is very important as we continue efforts in improving our services for foster parents statewide. Also, congratulations to the eight lucky winners of the \$50 gift card drawing. The winners were given a list of stores to choose from for their \$50 gift card.

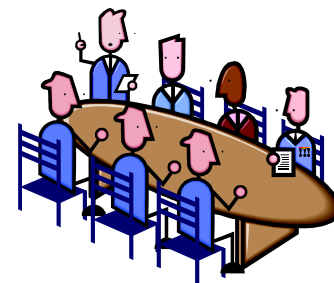
Congratulations!!

Alexandria Cummings - Waianae, Oahu
 Donald Kamai - Waianae, Oahu
 Linnae Kauwe - Keaau, Hawaii
 Loretta Mason - Waianae, Oahu
 Dana Smith - Ewa Beach, Oahu
 Mark Huff - Kapaa, Kauai
 Susana Ermitano - Hilo, Hawaii
 Michael Peck - Waianae, Oahu



Focus Groups

We've recently completed the foster parent focus groups on Oahu. Thanks again to those of you who have participated. The feedback you've provided to us is very important to assess what is working well, and what areas we need to improve on. In the months to come, we will be conducting focus groups on the neighbor islands, starting with Big Island in August and September. Foster parents who have gone through the licensing process through Hui Ho'omalua will be contacted soon to schedule a focus group session. These focus groups are designed to get feedback from you regarding your experience in the licensing process. The sessions are two hours in duration, and food is provided. Also as an incentive, participants who remain throughout the session will receive a \$25 gift card, and those who arrive early or on time will be entered in a \$100 gift card drawing.



For further information about focus groups, contact
 Jason Badua, Quality Assurance and Improvement Specialist at: (808) 441-1126.

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888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Fax: 441-1122

E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the foster/resource family community. Hui Ho'omalū facilitates this committee comprised of foster/resource parents and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai'i's keiki and the foster/resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai'i's foster/resource families.

RAC Committee Members:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalū
Department of Health

Department of Human Services

EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing

Family Court

Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalū

Foster/Resource Parents

Hawai'i Foster Parent Association

Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition

Heart Gallery Hawai'i

HOPE INC

Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalū & Kōkua 'Ohana

Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center

University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work

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